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Abstract

The Pennsylvania Advancement Schccl, a nenprcfit ccrporatien under ccntract tc the Schcol District of Philadelphia (partially funded under ESEA Titles I and III), is working fcr the seccnd year toward its gcal of stimulating positive change in the educatien ccmmunity. Four impcrtant elements ccmprising the mcdel schccl are the autencmy allowing it experimental freedcm; its physical plant providing flexible space utilizatien; its curriculum and teaching apprcach emphasizing discovery, expressien, and perscnal grcwth; and the quality and varied background of its staff (54 prcfessicnals including teachers, curriculum specialists, writers, researchers, and teacher educatien perscnnel). Current schcol activities include operatien as a demcnstration school and as a policy infcrmatien center with its staff acting as ccnsultants to varicus educational agencies and groups. It wcrks with five junicr high schcols in such aspects cf prcgram development as the minischccl ccncept in which a large schccl is divided intc several quasi-autcncmcus, manageable units to imprcve its human climate. Cther activities include a resident teacher fellcwship prcgram, spcnscrship cf weekend and summer workshcps, and ccoperation with several universities in wcrking with undergraduates and interns. Future cccperative prcjects include development of school cadres, cf an inncvatien ccnscrtium, and cf an administrative training prcgram. (JS)

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The Pennsylvania Advancement School:

A brief description of staff development and teacher education programs

April 28, 1969

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The Exemplary Model

The Pennsylvania Advancement School is a non-profit corporation under contract to the School District of Philadelphia. Its funding is from Titles I and III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and from the operating funds of the School District. In addition, funds from the Education Personnel Development Act and from private foundations have been used to support smaller projects initiated by the School.

The Advancement School began in Philadelphia in October, 1967 with a staff of about forty, half of whom had come from the North Carolina Advancement School. Now in its second year, the School has a staff of fifty-four professionals, including teachers and curriculum development specialists, administrators, writers, researchers, follow-up workers, and teacher education personnel.

As the extensive list of non-teachers indicates, the Advancement School is more than a school. In addition to its work with children in the building, the Advancement School is involved with curriculum development and dissemination, community liason and follow-up of its graduates, external staff development and research. The principal goal of the Advancement School is to stimulate positive change in the educational community; the school for children is the primary means toward this end.

In fact, we feel that the existence of our school for children is essential for the attainment of this larger goal. Not only does it provide us with a laboratory for trying out new methods and materials, but it also allows us to demonstrate to others new models for educating urban children. When we talk, then, of our "model school," we are not referring to an institution wedded to particular educational dogma or an inflexible manner of operation; rather we refer to an organization committed to inquiry, wherein the staff is free to work with new materials and techniques and to modify or reject those approaches which do not seem promising.

The elements which the model school comprises are numerous and difficult to isolate; we shall discuss four which to us seem most important: autonomy as a non-profit corporation; physical plant; approach to curriculum and teaching; and the quality of the staff.

1. Autonomy as a non-profit corporation. The School's status as a non-profit corporation allows it a degree of experimental freedom which is difficult to attain within a public school system. Not restricted by district-wide curriculum guides or instructional schedules, for instance, the staff is able to consider anew fundamental questions of curriculum and teaching technique. Similarly, the absence of traditional criteria for personnel selection has allowed the School to attract a variety of qualified

and creative staff. (We have several high school students who work with the research, staff development and dissemination departments---as well as four student writers from Philadelphia high schools who are working with teachers in our Communications Department.) This flexibility in the use of personnel allows the School to utilize people in ways that unlock new potential, such as a secretary who teaches a class in creative writing or a system analyst on leave from General Electric who works part-time in our Science Department.

The autonomous status of the School also allows it to modify its instructional schedule so as to maximize its contribution to the City public schools. For example, the School has been able to schedule in and use a month-long semester break to consolidate and write up curriculum materials and to spend more time working with teachers in other Philadelphia schools. The freedom from school system constraints and procedures also allows for more rapid acquisition of teaching supplies and curriculum materials, more latitude in the kinds of activities conducted with children outside the building, and the option for teachers to engage in extra-hours, non-salaried staff development work.

2. Physical plant. The School is housed in an old factory building which has been renovated extensively to provide visual stimulation and flexible space utilization.

With large, unconfined areas, pleasing and varied colors, draperies and carpets, the School conveys a feeling of openness and warmth for students, staff and visitors. Since we are attempting to establish behaviors and attitudes quite different from those which students (and some teachers) generally associate with school, the strikingly-different physical plant is an important help: we can break more easily the normal - and generally negative - response set evoked by "school."

In this setting students and staff tend to be more relaxed than in most schools. The floor lamps and soft, cushioned chairs scattered throughout the building help provide a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere in which the boys can feel comfortable. As one walks through the School it is not uncommon to find small groups of students (with or without a teacher) sitting comfortably on the floor or on soft chairs. In addition, each classroom is arranged and decorated by the students assigned to it in a manner appropriate to that group's particular program; the posters, photographs, and student artwork on the walls all contribute to this relaxed, non-institutional effect.

3. <u>Approach to curriculum and teaching</u>. The Advancement School begins with the assumption that curriculum development is a much more complicated procedure than is

traditionally recognized. The staff believes that inputs are needed not only from teachers and subject matter specialists but also from students, parents and community groups. A major effort to involve community leaders in our instructional program is now underway; attempts have also been made---not yet very successful---to involve parents more in various School projects. The most important source of ideas and relevant feedback is, of course, the students.

The instructional staff is uniquely alert to cues from the students. The curriculum and teaching techniques change frequently as we test new approaches; teachers collaborate on lessons, observe and regularly criticize each other's classes.

During most sessions teachers try out several different approaches. For example, at present one team of boys is engaged in a program with physical activity as its core, while another group spends most of its time in individual and small group projects. Although all the major departments of the School (Human Development, Communications, Perceptual Development, Reading, Life Sciences) are engaged in writing up the curriculum units they have tried, each term teachers from these departments modify and extend this material to increase its effectiveness with students.

While attempting to attain with its materials and techniques a variety of educational goals---from reading

and study skills to changes in self-concept---the Advancement School staff gives priority to the affective and creative aspects of learning. Emphasis is on discovery, expression and personal growth.

For instance, each student is a member of a family group which meets for an hour and a half each day for special activities. The main purpose of the family group structure is to allow students and faculty to get to know each other and to understand better how and why the group---and various members of the group---functions the way it does. Our hypothesis is that if students are offered a healthy emotional climate, an opportunity to participate actively in various learning experiences, a chance to analyze and evaluate these experiences, and supportive relationships with adults, they will learn.

4. Quality of the Staff. As indicated above, the School's autonomy allows it to attract onto its staff a variety of committed and creative people. While most staff members are experienced classroom teachers, the Advancement School also has on its faculty people trained in fields of social work, counseling, dramatics, research, media and writing.

The staff includes several former Peace Corps Volunteers, nine people with some experience teaching on a college or university level, and three with doctorates.

Our staff benefits tremendously from its contacts with outside consultants and researchers working regularly in our building. For example, we have a research group from the Pennsylvania School of Optometry and a psychiatric social-work team from St. Christopher's Hospital each spending one day a week at the School. Our staff also benefits from regular meetings with university faculty members, such as Professor Rod Napier of Temple and Professor Ralph Mosher from Harvard.

In general, the Advancement School staff is a collection of people - from varied backgrounds and with many different kinds of experiences - with a common goal: to discover better ways of educating children. Professor Ralph Mosher of Harvard's Graduate School of Education has called the faculty of the Advancement School "the most gifted group of practitioners that I have seen in any school in the country." The vitality and effectiveness of the model school -- and indeed the success of the entire operation -- can be attributed largely to the talent, commitment and creativity of its personnel; the staff of the Advancement School is undoubtedly its strongest resource.

The Advancement School's Work in Philadelphia

Establishing this exemplary model is extremely important because one of the major tasks of the Advancement

School is to offer help and suggest change strategies to other schools in Philadelphia and in the Commonwealth. This ability to offer help is determined, in large part, by the success of the model school's efforts in developing an effective learning environment for students and staff. It is obvious that we would not have much to say to others if the results in our building were not promising.

Within the broad context of the developing model, then, the Advancement School is engaged in a variety of teacher education and staff development programs, and is planning these programs in cooperation with administrators and faculty of five Philadelphia Middle schools, several other elementary and junior high schools - both public and parochial - and a group of talented and influential community leaders.

Because we are working with many schools and individuals, we realize there cannot be one program developed for all. Each school and group has its own problems and needs and we exert considerable effort in order to recognize these differences and provide the help and supports suitable for the cooperating school.

It is interesting to note, however, that there is one question facing all of the schools we work with: "How can the environment and climate of the schools be changed so that students will want to learn?" This, of course, is an extremely complicated question and is connected with policies

concerning administrative reorganization and managerial strategies as well as curricular innovations.

It is important to stress one more point before describing the various ways the Advancement School is working with the groups mentioned above. We do not ask nor do we want other schools to replicate our model. Our major aim, along with others in Philadelphia who are in the same business, is to help administrators and faculties become more aware of their own power and internal resources, help them recognize the resource potential in their communities, help them become more adept at problem-solving, and help them develop skills in group process and curriculum development so that each school or cluster of schools can

1) bring about the needed organizational, managerial, and curricular changes,

and 2) become staff development centers on their own, so that they can help others go through the process of change.

The Advancement School, then, is a resource and staff development center organizing itself to encourage and maximize the growth of several different kinds of staff development and resource centers. Said in another way, we are attempting to help the cooperating schools equip themselves so they might help others do the same.

<u>Components of the Teacher Education and Staff Development Program</u>

1) The Exemplary Model as a demonstration school.

As mentioned above the first ingredient in helping others to change is to develop a model school and to encourage many visitors to observe the proceedings. Visitors are asked to become participant-observers and their analyses are welcomed by the staff.

Because we feel that visitors are important and that participant observation helps bring about mutual learning, we screen the many requests very carefully so that those who come enjoy a fair opportunity to observe and so that we have an opportunity to talk with guests and to follow up the visitation days. For example, we arrange visiting days for people with whom we are working in the several schools. We encourage visits from community groups, district office personnel, and teacher interns.

2) The Advancement School serves as a policy information center and many of its staff act as consultants to various educational agencies and groups. As we develop internally and learn more about such topics as classroom environments, handling of students, curriculum development and teacher education, Philadelphia and other school districts may receive help either by visiting the School or by visits and consultation from our staff.

Several examples of this kind of activity may indicate the potential of this aspect of the external program of the School:

a) The Director of the School has served on several Philadelphia school district committees concerned with different areas of the educational process.

b) One staff member has developed skills in proposal writing and has helped two Philadelphia schools write proposals for grants of $10,000. The money is being distributed by the School District's Planning Office from funds received from ESEA Title III. One proposal was funded and news on the second will come shortly.

c) Several staff members have helped a special committee established by the Philadelphia Board of Education to prepare a decentralization program.

d) Two staff members have helped with the architectural plans being developed for a proposed middle school.

e) One staff member has spoken to several groups throughout the State concerning Advancement School teacher education programs.

f) Several members of the staff have helped plan and run workshops for Philadelphia department chairmen in English and Math, sponsored by the School District's Curriculum Office. Also, the full school, students and staff, helped in an all-day workshop for Social Studies department chairmen, also sponsored by the School District's Curriculum Office.

g) We have begun discussions with the Curriculum Office of the Department of Public Instruction concerning a cooperative two-week summer workshop for supervisors and teachers of English.

h) The Advancement School served as a consultant in helping a Black Community organization formulate and write a proposal for the establishment of a community school.

i) A staff member has initiated a city-wide program identifying and working with gifted student writers in Philadelphia high schools. In addition to Saturday morning sessions for about fifty students, four student-writers are working with Advancement School students and faculty in the regular instructional program of the School.

3) The Advancement School works intensively with five junior high schools in an attempt to help these schools develop the kinds of programs they want. Advancement School staff spend several days each week in each school (each staff member who is involved is assigned to a specific school) working with administrators, department chairmen, and teachers. While the program may vary to some extent in each school, generally the work consists of helping departments set goals, facilitating communication among teachers, observing and analyzing classroom techniques, encouraging teachers to try materials and ideas developed at the Advancement School, helping teachers develop their own curriculum, working with principals and other administrators on problems of school management, and providing whatever supports we are capable of delivering in a particular situation.

One area of organizational change we are very interested in pursuing in each school is the mini-school concept. An almost overwhelming problem in every school is overcrowding. School architecture and space design are good examples of the damaging influence of calculating construction costs on an economic basis alone, without considering social and human costs. As a result,

the average population of the Philadelphia Junior high schools is 2000 students and one school with which we are working has 2700 students.

Our feeling is that if a school can be divided into several quasi-autonomous, manageable units, with fewer students in each unit, the human climate can improve considerably. One of the cooperating schools has already established a mini-school and two others are planning such units for next September. These mini-schools are free to develop their own organization and curricular offerings and are important not only for what they are doing for their own students but for their impact on the rest of the school.

We are excited about a mini-school project to be initiated next September in an elementary school with which we are beginning to work. The school district is purchasing for this school a synagogue no longer in use. The principal is planning to move the 6th grade from the main building to the annex and establish it as an autonomous entity under the supervision of an Advancement School staff member who will spend most of his time in this annex. In addition, staff from the two junior high schools to which these students will go will plan with the mini-school staff and the result will be cluster organization and planning.

4) Another program designed to help bring about change in the schools with which we are working is the Resident Teacher Fellowship. Each semester one or two teachers from the cooperating schools come to the Advancement School and spend one full semester learning about the on-going curriculum development projects, exploring in more detail their own curriculum ideas while teaching a reduced class load, exchanging ideas with colleagues, working in the areas of group process and classroom analysis, and in general, getting the feel of an experimental school and what this construct really implies.

The rationale of this program is in the return to the regular assignment. We ask administrators to provide time and support to these people when they return so that they may work, in a helping way, with other teachers.

Currently we have five teachers in residence at the Advancement School and in addition, one parochial school teacher is visiting and observing for two weeks. We encourage these shorter visits as well.

Two more points about the resident teacher are important to mention. The first is that the

learning which takes place is mutual. We think resident teachers profit from their stay at the Advancement School. They have new experiences, time to think and to put their own ideas in perspective, and they see varied approaches to school organization, managerial techniques, curriculum development, counseling programs, handling of students and so forth. But they give the Advancement School much in return. Their analysis of our work has been very helpful and they are an excellent sounding board and reaction agent for ideas in the developmental stage. It is also fair to say they allow us, because of the contacts they have in their home schools, to have an accessibility we would not have otherwise.

Second, we feel the resident teacher program has so much validity we want to expand it considerably next year. Our experience this year with a more intensive program for four residents has demonstrated the real potential of an expanded model. The four teachers are with us for a full year, the first semester of which is spent as described above. This semester they are dividing their time between their home schools and the Advancement School and beginning the process of

creating staff development programs for their home schools with support from Advancement School staff. They, not Advancement School staff, have the responsibility for the programs and our function is helper, facilitator and resource supplier. This program, we feel, is an important step if schools are to become the creative forces all wish them to be.

5) The Advancement School organizes and operates workshops both through the summer and during the school year. Last summer fifty-five teachers and counselors spent six weeks at the Advancement School having workshops in Academic Simulations, Achievement Motivation theory and techniques, Communications (our language arts-humanities curriculum), Human Development (our social science-humanities curriculum), Perception Development (Math-Science), Improvisational Drama and Reading.

In addition to these workshops which participants took on a rotating basis (the counselors had a separate program), all fifty-five participated in group process activities. These exercises were designed to help individuals recognize how they

operated in groups, the role of groups, and what inputs are needed in order for groups to operate at maximum efficiency and with positive human interaction. Many participants said these activities were the highlight of the summer and were helpful in facilitating the planning each school group engaged in to determine how best to make use of the summer's experiences.

We are planning now a summer program for staffs of the schools with which we are working and although the details are not final, we know that the participant structure will be vertical, (that is, administrators, community people as well as teachers from each school will participate), and that we are going to give maximum emphasis to follow-up activities in the schools next year. We are asking schools to send teams that will be working together next year and are seeking changes in the administrative organization to provide these people time for planning and thinking.

In February and March of this year we ran a series of five Saturday workshops for personnel from two of the cooperating schools. We planned these workshops in conjunction with the participants and learned that the vertical arrangement was beneficial for all. Vice-principals, community people and teachers engaged in a kind of dialogue they rarely have time for, and all went through

the workshops as participants on the same level. We offered help in subject matter areas as well as group process. The enclosed report on these workshops is a detailed accounting of what occurred.

6) The Advancement School is extremely interested in working with undergraduates and teacher interns. In residence at the School now are two Harvard interns, two University of Pennsylvania interns, one undergraduate from Drexel University, two National Teacher Corps interns, one Antioch-Putney intern and four Antioch students on their work program. In addition, last summer we worked with ten University of Pennsylvania interns.

We feel it important that young teachers understand what an experimental school is, its daily life, its problems and its potential. This kind of experience is received by far too few people entering the profession. In addition, we are hoping that many of these students will choose an urban area as their teaching assignment and with this in mind, we feel justified in asking the cooperating universities for a role in recruiting the interns and in choosing those who work at the Advancement School.

Projects now being planned

The six areas described above are summaries of activities the Advancement School is currently engaged in while attempting to be a stimulus for change in Philadelphia and on the college campus. There are several ideas which we are exploring for the very near future, and these may be grouped into three categories: 1) projects with the Philadelphia School System; 2) University-related proposals; and 3) projects with Philadelphia community leaders.

1) Projects with the Philadelphia School System

a) The Cadre Idea: At the end of the workshop held at the Advancement School last summer, several of the participants suggested that they band together to form the core faculty of a new model school to be established in Philadelphia. The Cadre would staff part of an established school or become the nucleus of a staff for a middle school to be opened shortly.

With help from the Advancement School the group wrote a proposal to the Philadelphia School System asking for released time for training and planning. In addition, two members of the Advancement School staff wrote

a proposal to the Federal government requesting EPDA funds under the Special Projects category to finance their training.

The Cadre has had several meetings with important School System administrative groups and is working hard to formulate specific plans for this summer and next school year.

The Advancement School is very happy to be involved with this group because we feel it represents an important and effective way of staffing a school. Also, the idea of a group of teachers being responsible for part of a school has important implications for teacher morale and commitment.

The Advancement School is just one resource in the training program for the Cadre. Philadelphia School District personnel, university people and community leaders will be involved in helping the Cadre prepare for their assignment. This cooperative concept is important because the Advancement School recognizes that in order to be effective it must work with other innovative projects in Philadelphia as well as universities and community groups.

b) The Consortium: With this last point in mind, the director of the Advancement School has been working very carefully with other leaders of innovative projects in Philadelphia, and with the school district's Planning Office (which is responsible for these programs) in order to establish a consortium or cooperative which would plan how innovation could get into mainstream Philadelphia education. It is clear that no one project on its own will be able to bring about the changes needed in Philadelphia. If, however, all concerned with change work together, identify carefully their own abilities and resources, devise change strategies collectively, and cooperatively determine implementation tactics, innovation in Philadelphia will have more of a chance. The consortium idea is a high priority item and the Advancement School is extremely anxious to see it succeed.

c) Administrative Training Program: Another contemplated area of cooperation with the school district is in administrative training programs currently being planned. The school district is receiving foundation money to help finance these programs and the Advancement School has served as consultant in the

planning. An Advancement School experience will be part of the training received by every administrator or administrative trainee and emphasis will be placed upon the role of administrators in planning and managing innovation.

2) University-Related Proposals

We plan to expand our current university-related programs and to institute several new kinds of relationships. In addition to the six full-year positions that are filled by interns in the graduate education programs of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania and Antioch-Putney Graduate School, we plan to operate a summer training program for 10 Harvard interns and 8-10 interns from the University of Pennsylvania.

We also intend to increase the number of black student teachers in our building through programs we are now considering with Cheyney State College and with Temple University. We hope to combine students and faculty from these two institutions with our staff to operate an intensive student teaching and seminar program at the Advancement School. Temple also will be giving course credit for a summer workshop program we will be conducting for counselors from the Philadelphia schools.

A major objective is to involve university faculty members in the programs (teaching, counseling, curriculum development, research) of the School. We already have had considerable involvement from individual faculty members at Harvard and Temple; we now are meeting with faculty and administrative officers at the University of Massachusetts and the University of Pennsylvania to explore ways in which faculty members from these schools can become more closely involved in the work of the School. We are extremely interested in the possibility of joint appointments, whereby an individual will be on the faculty of both the Advancement School and a college or university with which we work. This arrangement not only would facilitate the involvement in our School of people with academic qualifications and interests but also would make it possible for course credit to be given for much of the work (from supervision to clinical research) now being done in our building.

Another aspect of our plans for expanding the School's training functions is to involve undergraduate institutions in our programs. We now have several students in the Antioch coop program working with our research, art, media and instructional

departments and previously have had students from Kalamazoo College and Yale University in similar roles. We have recently submitted a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities which would support a program of paid, semester-length internships for liberal arts majors from Lincoln University. We have been exploring similar kinds of programs with several other liberal arts colleges, including Hampshire College in Massachusetts. We view these arrangements both as an opportunity to involve individual faculty members in various aspects of our program and as a means of attracting into the field of education bright liberal arts majors who might not otherwise consider the possibility.

3) <u>Projects with Philadelphia community leaders</u>

In order to learn more about decentralizing the city's school system and to avoid the difficulties being experienced in New York, the Philadelphia Board of Education has appointed a special committee to recommend specific ways of accomplishing orderly decentralization. To help in this decentralization process and to learn more about working with community leaders, the Advancement School is planning to sponsor two semester-length workshops with about ten community leaders in each.

In the program, community leaders would have the opportunity to learn in depth about several subject-area approaches, new materials and techniques available, and still more important, have ample time to interact freely with a large number of public school teachers and several administrators. The exchange would be mutually educational and in addition to the regular program the community leaders would participate in special sessions, designed to introduce them to a large number of innovative models of education currently operating in the city. These sessions would include visits to these projects and discussions with directors and faculty of these projects, as well as occasional discussions with special guests from outside the city.